بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

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And remind (others), for the reminder most certainly benefits the Believers
Surah Zhaariyaat, verse 55

AMAANAT – A RECEDING LEGACY OF SHARIAH

Centuries ago, The Holy Prophet of Islam, Muhammad ﷺ uttered these epic words: **"Verily Amaanat descended into the depths of the hearts of men. Then they learnt from the Quran and they learnt from the sunnah… (then The Messenger of Allah spoke of the elimination of Amaanat).. A man shall go to sleep for a short while and (in that short period) amaanat would have been snatched from his heart… so people will resume trading in the morning and almost no one will be fulfilling amaanat; And (trustworthy people shall become so few and far between that) it will be said "there is one trustworthy person among a certain tribe…** (Hadeeth narrated by Bukhari)

Indeed, the attribute of amaanat that was once upon a time the trademark of every Muslim is slowly making its exit from the hearts and souls of people. Amaanat or trustworthiness is today giving way to dishonesty, deceit, insincerity, and falsehood. The forecast made by our Rasool ﷺ is ominously materializing before our very eyes. The legacy of honesty left behind by our pious predecessors is receding as swift as the ebbing tide. This is truly a clear sign of the approach of Qiyaamat. According to this hadeeth, a time will dawn on mankind when honest people will be conspicuous because of their dwindling numbers. The disappearance of amaanat from the hearts of people while asleep actually refers to the swift, overnight change that will overtake the hearts of people. It is also indicative of the weakness of iemaan, for linguistically, iemaan and amaanat both derive from the root word *aman*. A Hadeeth states: "There is no iemaan for one who has no amaanat"(Narrated by Imam Ahmed and Tabarani)

WHAT IS AMAANAT?

Amaanat is an Arabic work that means trust or trustworthiness. It refers to any form of trust that has to be honoured. Trust in Islam covers a wide range of activities and situations, from the safe-keeping of wealth and property to the fulfilment of responsibilities in a worldly or religious position. Even one who has no responsibilities except to himself or herself must consider such responsibilities as part and parcel of the sacred trust vested in every human being by Allah, The Almighty. Abuse of trust or failure to fulfil amaanat has been declared a sign of hypocrisy in the hadeeth, as mentioned in Bukhari and Muslim. The opposite of amaanat is khiyaanat which means abuse of trust, or dishonesty. Rasoolullah ﷺ used to seek protection from khiyaanat in the following words: ***"O Allah! I seek your protection from khiyaanat, for it is indeed an evil confidante"***

We enlist a few examples of amaanat and its application in the life of an individual:

The Amaanat of the physical body: The physical body and its limbs, organs, and other features are all an integral part of amaanat. We cannot use this body in a manner that is contrary to the terms and conditions of its owner. The Owner of our bodies is Allah, and we are the trustees. A trustee can only act within the limits and confines set out by the owner. This represents yet another important aspect of amaanat. This is one of the reasons why suicide is haraam, for it entails abuse of the amaanat of our bodies. Just as Allah has not given one individual the right to take the life of another, He has also prohibited the individual from taking his or her own life.

Safe-guarding property or wealth placed in one's care: such as pawned items, deposit of valuables, storage of goods etc. The law for this type of amaanat is, that if the entrusted property or goods are stolen or damaged through sheer neglect on the part of the trustee (the one in charge), then he or she will be held responsible and must reimburse the owner for the loss. If the loss incurred without any neglect or due diligence from the trustee then the latter is not liable. When the owner demands that the trust be given back, it should be handed back in the same, original condition that it was at the beginning. The one looking after such trust is not allowed to utilize that item or property except with the permission of the owner. Likewise, one is not allowed to lend to another any item that was entrusted for safekeeping. A book, vehicle, phone, computer, clothing, and similar items that have been handed in for safekeeping may not be lent to a third party. To do so is haraam and a breach of trust. Any damage or loss sustained as a result of such unauthorized lending must be compensated for by the person to whom that item or property was entrusted.

The above type of amaanat is also found in people handling cash of others, such as cashiers working in a business, managers of companies who handle cash money, treasurers of organisations, etc. This amaanat entails safe-guarding that cash, spending it within restrictions set by the company, abstaining from embezzlement of the funds, not dipping one's hand into the cash to steal and usurp. Today in the modern business world, corrupt employees and managers have invented different schemes and methods to steal from the company they work for. Siphoning company funds into fictitious bank accounts, claiming fictitious returns on goods and pocketing the cash, juggling company books to siphon money, stealing goods from the company and selling them to friends outside; colluding with workers of other companies in stealing, are some of the dishonest ways of earning money, all of which constitute breach of trust and are totally haraam. Sadly, today many Muslims are in the forefront of such violations of amaanat.

TRUST FUNDS: Another haraam abuse of trust is to use the money from a trust fund for one's own purpose and benefit. A trust fund in terms of Shariah will include all types of monies and property that are held in trust by one person on behalf of others. If the inheritance of an heir is not claimed, the person who holds that share in trust has got a sacred duty to guard it till the point of disbursement.
With regards to the above, Allah Ta'ala states in the Holy Quran: **"He who steals from a trust, shall bring forth what he had stolen on the Day of Judgment"** (Surah 3, verse 161).

This verse has a literal meaning, as explained in the hadeeth. It means that one who has committed abuse of trust by theft or fraudulent activity, and died before fulfilment of taubah, shall come before Allah on the Day of Judgment carrying the stolen property or the embezzled funds around his neck. That is the humiliation such a person will suffer on Qiyaamat Day. In a hadeeth narrated by Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim Rasoolullah ﷺ is reported to have said: ***"I must not find any of you coming to me on the Day of Judgement with a camel or a horse or a cow or any other wealth (that he had stolen) hanging around his neck and saying 'O Muhammad! Help me!', for I shall respond by saying: "I have no power to do anything for you in front of Allah (today). I had conveyed the message to you (on earth)!"***

This hadeeth sounds an exceptionally stern warning against people who commit abuse of trust and embezzlement of funds. Our Beloved Master ﷺ has promised intercession for the major sinners in this Ummat (as narrated by Bayhaqi, Ibn Hibban and others) yet in this instance he shall turn away the fraudster and the abuser of trust and totally deny them his intercession on the Day of Qiyamah. In spite of the vast mercy that Our Rasool was endowed with, he shall refuse to intercede for one who has committed abuse of trust. The hadeeth also explains the meaning of the above verses; that the abuser of trust shall bring forth his or her ill-gotten gains on the Day of Judgment for all to see. While in this world cheaters and fraudsters are able to cover their tracks and escape exposure, on the Day of Judgement the truth will be exposed for the whole world to see.

The Position of Trust: One who is placed at the helm of any organization or as manager of a business venture has a responsibility to fulfil the requirements of that position with dedication, commitment, and honesty. In this regard, one hadeeth states: ***"When amaanat is destroyed then await the Hour (of Qiyaamat)".*** The Sahaaba asked: "And how shall amaanat be destroyed?" He replied: ***"When the affairs of people shall be entrusted to unfit leaders then await the Hour"*** (Narrated by Bukhari and Ahmed) This hadeeth refers specifically to the affairs of the country, but generally it includes the affairs of a group or a community. The amaanat spoken of here is that of leadership. A leader has one of the highest forms of trust, for every decision and move he makes affects the people under his control. A leader sets the trend in behaviour, character, and good conduct for people who follow him.

Using company property: A person working for, or managing the company of another is not allowed by Shariah to make personal use of the vehicle, phone, stationary. equipment, and machinery of that company without the owner's permission. All these items form part of amaanat. Forging vouchers for petrol, accommodation, travel allowances, or other company benefits is also abuse of trust and is haraam.

The position of a muazzhin: One Hadeeth describes the muazzhin as one who has an amaanat. This amaanat refers to the fact that he has to ensure the athaan is given on time thus validating the salaah for those who will attend, as well as giving people enough time to get ready for the jamaat salaah.

Trustees of a waqf property: Waqf property includes the musjid, madresa, or any such institute that has been consecrated for the purpose of Deen or the benefit of the poor. Those in charge of waqf property also have a sacred amaanat to fulfil in the running and administration of such property. The Shariah enjoins that a trustee of waqf shall not act in a way that endangers or damages the waqf, or that causes loss in revenue to the waqf, or defeats the purpose and objective of the waqf. Such is the gravity of breaching this trust that a trustee can be disqualified and expelled from his post should any of this happen in a waqf institution.

THE AMAANAT OF CONFIDENTIALITY: Rasoolullah ﷺ said: ***"Meetings come with confidentiality"*** (Abu Dawood) Another hadeeth states: ***"When a man says something and then goes away, it is amaanat."*** (Tirmizhi) Abdullah bin Mas'ud (radhiyallahu anhu) narrates that Rasoolullah ﷺ said: ***People meet each other on the amaanat of Allah; so, it is not permissible for one of them to disclose what the other does not like.*** (Kanzul-Ummaal)

These ahadeeth speak of respecting the secrets and personal information of others. It is haraam to divulge the secrets or personal matters of another, unless the wealth or life of someone is threatened. Likewise, meetings that are held behind closed doors deserve confidentiality unless the head or chair of the meeting has given permission to disclose certain information. Today, the element of gossip is prevalent. The moment one hears a juicy piece of gossip, there is no delay in sharing that with others. The amaanat of our Iemaan demands otherwise.

SPECIAL TITLES OF THE SAHAABA رضي الله عنهم

These titles appear in various ahadeeth of Rasoolullah ﷺ. *They convey to us that the Sahaaba were pioneers in every field of Islam, in Fiqh, Tafseer, Qiraat, Governance, Warfare, etc. May Allah Ta'ala be pleased with all of them.*

The Most Compassionate in the Ummah	Abubakr Siddeeq
The Strictest in the Laws of Allah	Omar bin Khattab
The Possessor of the Two Lights	Uthman bin Affaan
The Chief Justice in this Ummah	Ali bin Abi Taalib
The AMEEN (Trustworthy) of this Ummah	Abu Ubaidah bin Jarrah
The Qaari of this Ummah	Ubay bin Ka'ab
The Inheritance Expert of this Ummah	Zaid bin Thaabit
The Jurist of this Ummah	Abdullah bin Mas'ud
The Chief of Commentators	Abdullah bin Abbas
The most knowledgeable in Halaal and Haraam	Mu'aaz bin Jabal
The Sword of Allah	Khalid bin Waleed
The Saint of this Ummah	Abu Zharr Ghifaari
The Special Friend of Rasoolullah ﷺ	Zubair bin Awaam